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FM THE SITUATION ROOM //TOHAK014//

TO GOMPERT/BORG/RODMAN FOR THE SECRETARY

~~TOP SECRET SENSITIVE CONTAINS CODEWORD VIA BLACK PATCH WH50131~~

TOHAK014

FEBRUARY 11, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR SECRETARY KISSINGER
FROM: THE SITUATION ROOM
SUBJECT: INFORMATION ITEMS

SOVIET MINECLEARING IN THE PORT SAID AREA IS DENIED: DAD CAIRO REPORTS THAT AN ANNOUNCEMENT BY TASS ON JANUARY 31 THAT SOVIET SHIPS WOULD BEGIN MINESWEEPING OPERATIONS IN THE PORT SAID AREA LATER THIS YEAR HAS BEEN DENIED BY A HIGH-RANKING RELIABLE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL. THE EGYPTIAN SAID THE U.S. WOULD BE ASKED TO ACCOMPLISH THIS TASK ONCE THE DECISION WAS MADE TO BEGIN SWEEP OPERATIONS. HE ALSO STATED THAT CAIRO HAS NO INTENTION OF GRANTING THE SOVIETS USE OF THE NAVAL FACILITIES AT PORT SAID. DIA BELIEVES THE TASS ANNOUNCEMENT WAS DELIBERATELY DECEPTIVE AND MAY BE RELATED TO ATTEMPTS BY THE SOVIETS TO REESTABLISH A NAVAL PRESENCE AT PORT SAID. IN ONE SUCH EFFORT, THE SOVIET NAVAL ATTACHE IN CAIRO SUGGESTED ON FEBRUARY 4 THAT SHIPS FROM HIS COUNTRY WOULD VISIT PORT SAID SOON. THE NEXT DAY THE EAST GERMAN NAVAL ATTACHE FALSELY REPORTED THE ARRIVAL OF SIX SOVIET MINESWEEPERS AT PORT SAID. RECENT SOVIET MINESWEEPING EFFORTS IN EGYPTIAN WATERS HAVE BEEN LIMITED TO THE STRAIT OF GUBAL.

DIA and JCS
reviews completed.

IRAQ-IRAN SITUATION: IRAQI AND IRANIAN TROOPS HAVE CLASHED FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS IN THE SAME AREA WHERE FIGHTING TOOK PLACE IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH A YEAR AGO. THE IRANIAN PRESS SAYS AN IRAQI FORCE THAT INCLUDED SOME TANKS AND ARTILLERY WAS DRIVEN BACK BY IRANIAN BORDER GUARDS. IN BAGHDAD'S VERSION, THE FIGHTING OCCURRED WHEN IRANIAN TROOPS CROSSED INTO IRAQ.

IRAN HAD BEEN INCREASING ITS TROOP AND ARMOR STRENGTH ALONG THE BORDER SINCE THE BEGINNING

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***** WHSR COMMENT *****

JANKA, SECFL

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OF THIS MONTH. [REDACTED] THE IRAQIS WERE PREPARING TO RETALIATE AGAINST IRAN FOR THE DOWNING OF TWO IRAQI AIRCRAFT IN NORTHERN IRAQ IN DECEMBER. THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY NOTES THAT IRAQIS APPARENT ATTEMPT TO PLAY UP ITS QUARREL WITH IRAN MAY HAVE BEEN TIMED WITH THE COMING VISIT OF WALDHEIM TO TEHRAN AND BAGHDAD. THE IRAQIS MAY BE HOPING THE UN WILL ASSUME A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN THE DISPUTE, AS IT DID A YEAR AGO WHEN THE SECURITY COUNCIL TOOK UP THE ISSUE.

INDOCHINA SITUATION: KC GUNNERS YESTERDAY SANK A CAMBODIAN NAVY BARGE NEAR THE MEKONG RIVER NARROWS, SOME 25 MILES SOUTH-EAST OF PHNOM PENH. INSURGENT GROUND UNITS ARE KEEPING HEAVY PRESSURE ON GOVERNMENT POSITIONS ALL ALONG THE RIVER. COMBAT ACTIVITY IN THE PHNOM PENH AREA DURING THE PAST FEW DAYS CAME LARGELY AT THE GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVE. IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, THE COMMUNISTS HAVE LAUNCHED FRESH ATTACKS AGAINST A NUMBER OF WIDELY SEPARATED PROVINCIAL CAPITALS, BUT GOVERNMENT DEFENDERS HAVE REACTED WELL.

LITTLE MILITARY ACTION WAS REPORTED IN SOUTH VIETNAM ON THE FIRST DAY OF TET -- THE THREE-DAY LUNAR NEW YEAR HOLIDAY -- WHICH BEGAN TODAY. ONGOING GOVERNMENT COUNTERATTACK AND MOPPING-UP OPERATIONS IN SEVERAL OF THE NORTHERN PROVINCES PROVOKED SOME SMALL CLASHES, BUT CASUALTIES WERE LIGHT.

THATCHER WINS LEADERSHIP OF CONSERVATIVE PARTY:

REUTER REPORTS THAT MARGARET THATCHER TODAY WON THE LEADERSHIP OF BRITAIN'S OPPOSITION CONSERVATIVE PARTY. THE FIRST WOMAN TO HOLD THE POST, THE FORMER EDUCATION MINISTER WON 146 OF THE 276 TOTAL ELIGIBLE VOTES.

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